

the snakeman of alcatraz

as long as he could remember they'd been on his ass for playing with himself. his mother used to tell him, "herbert, for the last time keep your hands off that ugly thing

or i'll have your father slam it in the screen door!" on the sly his father would try another approach: "herbie, old kid old sock, let's mosey down to rosey's an' ah'll pick ya out the best piece of meat in the place."

"awww, dad," he'd say, "awwww, dad," and blush as bloody as fresh calves liver. what really bugged them was when he started to do it in public. neighbors gasped and daddy

kicked his adolescent ass, but it was a small town so no one called the cops. fortunately his playmates found a place for him in their pantheon of oddities:

"thumper," they called him, "hey, thump-a-thump thumperrrr!" and sometimes he'd take it out and do it for them. in fact, he became very good at it, switching hands, for instance, and never missing

a stroke. but it was not a negotiable talent, not even with ringling brothers or the nu-pike. of course the time came when he ran off to the big city, took it out on times square,

and created quite a happy stir until the men in blue, those guardians of our christian complex, busted him. the aclu, claiming constitutional

abuse took precedent over that of self, carried the case to the supreme court, but, in the midst of the attorney blitz's peroration, the whole goddamed capital could hear it -- thump-

a-thump-thump! they tossed his ass in jail for life, but here is the reconciliation of our conflicts -- he loved to fondle snakes and milk them, and he discovered an anti-cancer serum,

which proves that god humps those who hump themselves.

I know a guy
who won a varsity letter in Rodeo
at San Luis Obispo State College
(his special event, if I remember correctly,
consisted in severing prairie oysters with a chicken-wire
lassoo.).

He likes to talk, about the school,
about, for instance, the good fellowship in the dorm
where once a week the guys got out the telltale tape
and measured each other's cocks.

He admits it was no Harvard,
but what the hell, he urges,
slamming his beer mug for emphasis,
it was no Dominguez Hills either,
where the elevation is a fathom below sea level
and the poet-in-residence reportedly doubles
as night watchman in the oil fields,
and, in spite of the luminescent sign at the Avalon Blvd.
offramp,
no one has ever discovered the campus,
or, at any rate, returned to tell of it.

dogshit, and other sorrows
(for rod mckuen)

outside my door the sun bakes dogshit cakes.
i write a letter to my lawyer.
the baby is pulling the poor cat's tail.
the boob tube is busted.

i hear a new dog scratching at the sidewalk.
early this morning, shitfaced,
i tiptoed home through dogshit.
this afternoon the neighbor's kid sat down in it.

i write a letter to my lawyer, sign it robert lowell.
to my mistress, sign it rod mckuen.
to my credit union, sign it ezra pound.
i reach outside the door, dip my pen, and write myself a
letter.
the baby picks the cat up by the tail.
my wife says shit.
the baby imitates her.
i think i hear the cat gasp something vaguely fecal.

i open a letter from my mistress.
you'll never guess what she has sent me.
i open a letter from my mother.
also, some manuscripts have been returned, a little brown
along the edges.

i wake at night from dreams of st. bernards,
prelapsarian great danes,